

SENATE BILL 4081

By McNally

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 15, Chapter 2, Part 1, relative to designating October 9 as "Firefighters' Memorial Day".

WHEREAS, on October 9, 1871, the Great Chicago Fire killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres in 27 hours; and

WHEREAS, in 1920, President Woodrow Wilson issued the first National Fire Prevention Day proclamation and, since 1922, National Fire Prevention Week has been observed during the week in which October 9 falls on the calendar. In addition, the President of the United States has signed a proclamation pronouncing a day of national observance during that week every year since 1925; and

WHEREAS, firefighters are dedicated to raising public awareness about fire prevention measures and the dangers of fire. Tennessee's firefighters teach school children and motivate the public to practice fire safety through fire drills and seminars; and

WHEREAS, according to a report by the nonprofit National Fire Protection Association, 112 on-duty firefighter fatalities occurred in 1999, marking the highest annual U.S. firefighter death toll since 1989 (118). The report cites an increase of 21 deaths from 1998, and also indicates that stress and overexertion, usually resulting in heart attacks, continue to be the leading cause of fatal injury for on-duty U.S. firefighters; and

WHEREAS, although on-duty firefighter fatalities have declined over the past two decades, the rate of deaths per million structure fires has dropped very little, and the rate of deaths in collisions per million structure fires while responding to alarms has more than doubled; and

WHEREAS, smoke and poisonous gasses are the leading causes of death in fires and can kill a person long before the fire itself; underestimating the power of fire and the time it takes to escape a home, or workplace, after a fire ignites causes unnecessary loss of life; and

WHEREAS, developing a home escape plan includes everyone in the household knowing two ways out of each room, having an outdoor location in front of the home where everyone will meet upon exiting, and memorizing the local fire department's telephone number or 911; and

WHEREAS, Tennessee's fire departments are dedicated to saving lives and property from the devastating effects of fire and are joined by the concerned citizens and government officials of Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of those brave men and women who have put their lives on the line while fighting fires, and those who have lost that battle in order to save and protect their fellow citizens, the state of Tennessee is proud to dedicate a special day to remember and honor these fire heroes; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting and proper that those firefighters who have dedicated their lives to the safety of others, and those who have given their lives in this noble cause, be recognized and remembered for the accomplishment of their high purposes; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 15, Chapter 2, Part 1, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated section:

Section 15-2-114.

October 9 of each year shall be observed as "Firefighters' Memorial Day," to be proclaimed as such by the governor, to honor and recognize firefighters in this state for their courageous and dedicated service. Such day shall not be a legal holiday as defined in § 15-1-101.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2008, the public welfare requiring it.